

# From Bern to Zagreb by bike

## Summer 2024

1-26 Juli

@joran\_urbex on Instagram

Distance: 1400km

Ascent: 15000m



# Backstory

Cycling is dumb, but walking is slow and by cars you wont go anywhere and wont have adventure. That's why I cycle. To meet people and to have fun.

## Day 0: The Flixbus Journey



Around lunchtime me and Varenz called for the final time, and met at the FlixBus station at the "John F kennedylaan" (51.4456, 5.48102) around 20 minutes before the bus arrived. When I checked the FlixBus app again I realized that the bus was actually arriving at another location, next to the student hotel in Eindhoven. We cycled there (around 5 minutes) only to find out that the location listed on the FlixBus app was wrong. It listed the so called "street" it was on, which was the "stationsweg" while it was actually at the John F kennedylaan (previous location we were at). We



hurried back and saw the bus arriving while still cycling. We were JUST on time, but luckily made it after some stressful situations.

When we were finally on the bus we started listening to some music and playing "zweeds pesten". A easy game we were both very familiar with. About 30 minutes into the trip Varenz realized that he had forgotten his ID card and only had his driving license with him. He was technically not allowed to go outside of the Netherlands so I told him to make sure he could pick up his id card somewhere on the route, but he refused (will come back later). Without a valid ID you are technically not allowed on FlixBus's, but in my experience they never check it.



When we arrived in Frankfurt at 20:00, our transfer station, we had 3 hours to kill. We went to a floating doner boat, and then to a KFC for some cheaper food.

When we got back to the flixbus station, at this time already dark, we started stressing about if we would be allowed to go on the flixbus. If we would be refused we would have to travel for many more hours by train. We were also worried about crossing the border into Switzerland, because it's a non-EU border. In the end we got on without any problems. When crossing the border into Switzerland from Germany in Basel, we saw the border guard was very tired and waved us through. No border

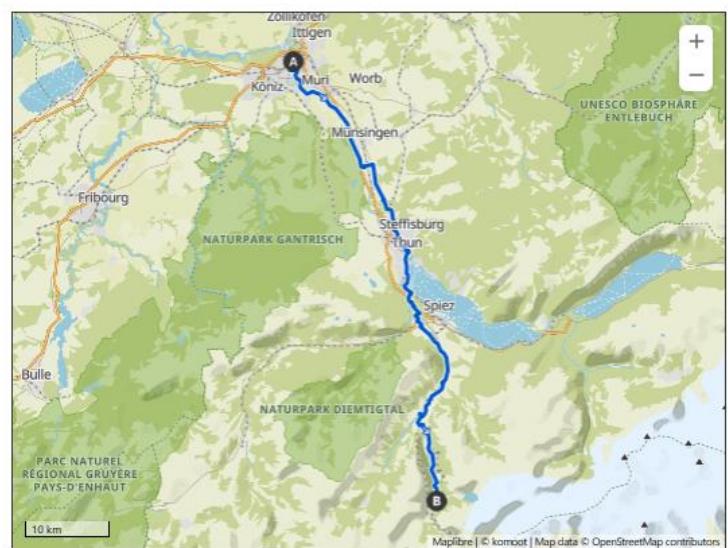


check, so we were allowed to continue into Switzerland.

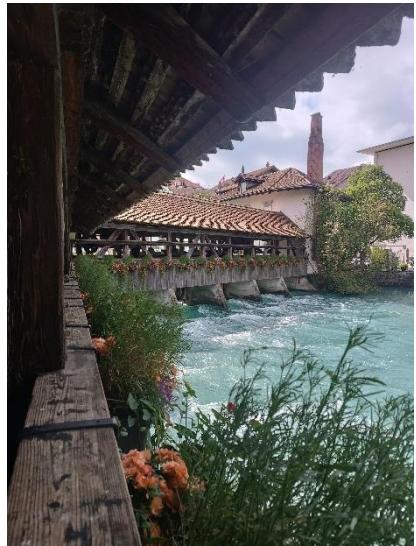
# Day 1: starting cycling

80km, 1100hm, KISC (pfadi-kleinbasel.ch)

When we finally arrived in Bern at 5 in the morning, we were VERY tired, but chose to push through. We went to the only bakery in the whole of Bern open this early, and ate a LOT of bread with some spreads. When we were done eating and waking up at around 6:30, we started cycling. We went through the beautiful city center of Bern and wanted to see the bears in the cage just south of it, but they hadn't waken up yet. Around that time I realized that I had already lost the first item of the trip: a slipper. Losing things would



After the first couple of km I realized that I was going to be dying with the new saddle I had put on. I had been searching for a good saddle for over a year before, but couldn't find anything good. When we got to Thun I bought some new slippers, and some padded shorts.



In Thun, we also saw our first nice bridge and beautiful water. When we continued cycling I noticed a Bee had been hitchhiking on my shirt for a couple of km already. It ended up going around 15km, and flew away without paying taxi money.

Around Thun we also realized that we had never been as tired before in our entire life, and I drank energy drink for the first and last time in my life. It was disgusting but did give me a nice well needed energy boost.

We then started the fun, but very hard ascent to the "Kandersteg international scouts center". It was very steep, without a break but we managed to make it. I wanted to, however do around 100km this day and also visit a lake at the top. When we arrive at Kandersteg though we were very tired

and decided to call it a day. At the campground we started searching for a nice group to put our tent up with for the night. The first group we spoke to, a 14-18 year olds group from Basel, liked our idea and let us put up our tent for the night. We cooked some dinner, and went to sleep very early.

dinner: Rice with beans and tomatoes



## Day 2: Wet but nice

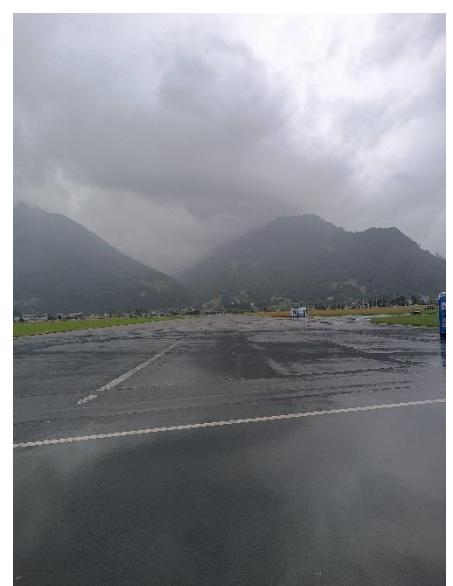
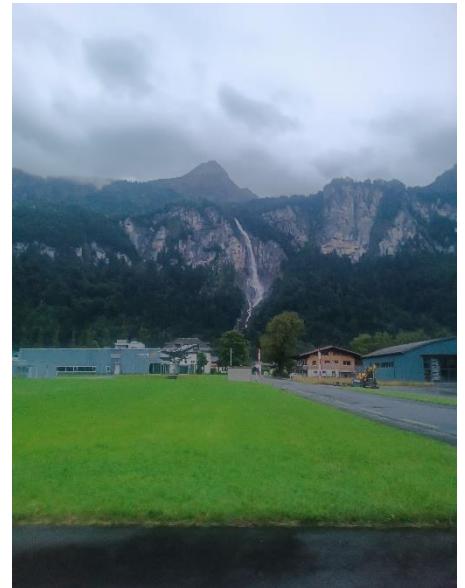
80km, 600m, camping Aareslucht

We were woken up by the sound of children running around, and realized we had slept until 9. We packed up camp, went around Kandersteg to view some things and then started the descent. We already felt the kilometers in our legs, but luckily the first part was downhill. Around lunchtime we went to a store, and bought a block of local cheese. Put it on some bread. Was nice. I hit a maximum of 60km/h on the descent. We crossed a nice hill and flew into Interlaken. A nice town between 2 lakes. While still raining we crossed over an old military airport runway and went to the station to take a well needed shit. After about an hour in Innsbruck we continued the trip, past the Brienzersee, into Briens. Then all hell broke loose and it started to rain like shit. We decided to look for shelter and found some in a playground hut.

When we realized the weather wasn't going to clear up any time soon, we decided 17:00 was early enough to cook dinner. We started to cook some canned stuff, which wasn't too tasty but had calories, and that's what its about. When the weather finally cleared up, we didn't feel like continuing to cycle, but managed to do 16km in the dark. When we arrived at a campground we decided we were due for a shower and didn't go wild camping. It had been very hot, the whole vacation, so we knocked on the door and were started to set up camp at the campground, and wanted to shower. When we got to the showers they required coins, so we went back to the campground owner to buy some coins. After all was done we went to bed and started to get ready for a HARD day.

Dinner: something in a can, still have no idea what I was eating





## Day 3: Jochpass

22km, 1500m, wildcamping

Probably the hardest, but most fun part of the whole trip.

When we woke up, the weather had luckily cleared up. We woke up with some AMAZING views, and were looking forward to what the day would bring. We started cycling to the nearest store to buy some final supplies for the heavy climb and breakfast. We bought a whole bread, as every morning, and when we got out of the store we met our first fellow bikepacker of the whole trip. He was heading back to around the Liechtenstein area. When talking to him he suddenly pulled a cooked egg out of his pocket. Was very weird :0



This day was only 22km, but almost 1500m of altitude. The steepness was almost consistently around 10%. When we started the main ascent, we rode some nice gravel trails, and a hunting bird flew down from the sky and picked up a mouse just meters away from us. During the whole valleys length we were delighted with the nature that surrounded us, and luckily the higher we got the colder it also got. A helicopter was circling around us and it looked like it picked up a cow, probably sick. A lot of parts of this trail were too steep to cycle so we had to walk for a lot of kilometers. The grass was so green everywhere.

Around 2/3 up we realized that if we wanted to make it

to the top today we needed to hurry up quite a lot. The last 250m of height were unpassable with a bike, which we new before. We were planning to use the ski lift, which closes at 17:00

We continued cycling, exactly on pace. When we got to the top around 10 minutes before the lift was supposed to close, it was already closed. We decided to camp next to the bottom building of the lift and take the first lift up the next day. We put our tents up right next to the lifts and started cooking. We made the worst pasta I had ever had, with swan paste and jam as a flavoring. This was basically just rations because we were planning to still be able to go to a store. All other nights I wildcamped were illegal, but in Switzerland it is allowed above the tree border, and not in national parks. Luckily we had around 10m<sup>2</sup> of space that fit those requirements, so we were doing it legally. It was VERY cold here, and we found our first snow. Keep in mind that we are in July and in the valley below it was scorching hot, at 28c. To combat the cold a bit we started looking for a place to make a fire. We stumbled upon a grill area just 100m away, with a little hut with firewood. We



made a fire, with the best views imaginable and about an hour later we went to sleep. It was an amazing, but cold night.



## Day 4: The great descent + Luzern

59km, 340m, sleeping location: 47.0536, 8.3506

After waking up very cold we packed up our tents, took some pictures of the amazing views from our sleeping location and went to the other side of the building we were sleeping next to. We called the ski lift and were instructed on how to put the bikes on the lift. When we arrived at the top we had to pay for the lift, but the liftie forgot to charge us 2x instead of 1. Because of that it was still expensive, but not too bad. It is Switzerland, so like 30 bucks per person.

I don't remember anymore if we ate breakfast, but I don't think so.

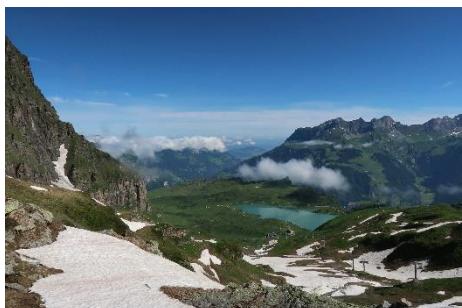




When we arrived at the top of the mountain (2300m) we had the most amazing views I had ever seen in my life. It was this perfect mountain range in the backpack, with some clouds below us. It felt like absolute heaven. We went to the ski restaurant at the top to take a shit, and then went for a hike all the way up to 2400m. It was very quiet, and there was almost nobody around. That is because it was very early, and apparently the bike trails were still closed.

After having hiked for a bit we got back on the bikes and got ready for the wildest descent of my life. The trails we wanted to go down were still closed as we found out at the top, but we were able to just go anyways. It was however a red mtb trail, with a lot of snow on top. Also: Varenz had never even really mountainbiked in his life, especially not with luggage.

When we started we were greeted by a 2m wall of snow next to the path, in fucking July. We went down the first 500hm at a very slow pace because of the steepness and roughness. When we

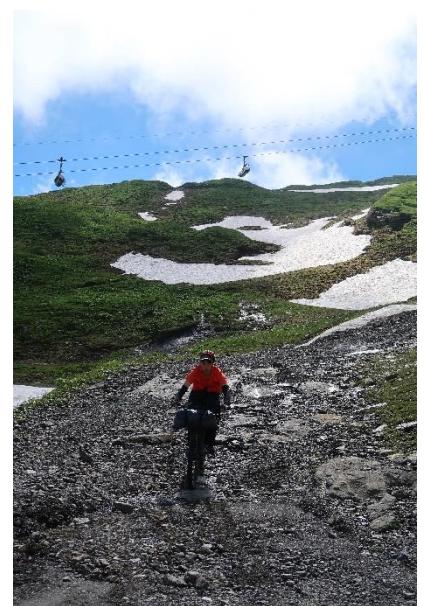


were going down the first meters of trail a quad passed us and we didn't understand what it was up to. When we got a bit further we saw that there were still gates on the trails every 50m, and they

were clearing them. We were the absolute first of the season to go down the trails. I went at a nice pace and did some jumps. At some point I went over a meter high and when I landed my left pannier bag fell flew away and landed a couple meters further away. Varenz had some troubles going down, but after taking it slow it was fine. When we got down the first descent some people came up to us with amazing videos of me bombing it down the singletracks and doing jumps with my fully loaded bike, it was sick. A guy came up to us and asked us how we got up, because he was not allowed on the lift. It was because the trails didn't open yet. Oops :)

We continued flying down the beautiful gravel roads hitting a top speed of 60km/h, until we got stopped by tons of cows on our tracks. We had to slow down and boo them out of our way. When we finally arrived in Engelberg, it was time for breakfast.

We went into the local supermarket, and were ready to make a proper meal instead of what we had eaten the evening before. We bought some eggs, bread, a pizza, apfelschorle, and of course Nippon's and Haribo. We cooked up some nice omelet's right next to



a building site and ate it with the amazing view of the Jochpass.

About an hour later we continued our journey. Because there were no unpaved paths out of the valley we went via the main road, where the speed limit was 60. Because it was super steep, this wasn't a problem for us, and I hit 70km/h while passing some cars. We passed a kayaking competition, and when we finally arrived at the end of the valley the beautiful lake Luzern was waiting for us. We had a little break at a store to buy some sunglasses I had lost and continued to try to reach goldau today. When we arrived in Luzern 40km behind schedule, we realized this was not possible anymore, and started looking for a spot to sleep. We walked around the beautiful Luzern for a bit but decided to continue cycling and see what we would come across.



We went up a mountain for a bit while putting in request for a warmshowers host in the area. We arrived at a nice cooking area and started preparing dinner. We had some bomba pasta with spinach and salmon, with a rehydrated smoothie on the side and the pizza we bought before as toetje. I was trying to fit it in my pan, and ended up thinking it was a good idea to put the empty salmon can inside the pan to keep up the center and let it cook more as a oven. It worked quite well, but I forgot there was plastic inside of the salmon can. This meant the center of the pizza was full of plastic damps and we had to eat around that. Was still very nice. After we realized

one of the warmshowers hosts very close had his full address online we decided to very boldly just ring his doorbell. After he didn't pick up we went up to the hill next to his house and put up our tents. We had to do this very



quickly because it was full of mosquitos. And when I say full, I mean, the most mosquitos I have ever seen and heard around me. When I was inside of my tent after 5 minutes my whole body was covered in bite marks and it was so itchy. Very surreal how so many animals can live so close together. We went to bed and finally had some well needed rest.



## Day 5: ~rest day + upbex

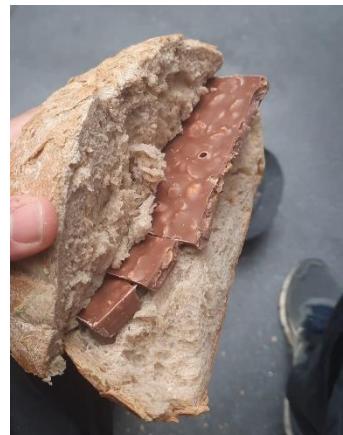
30km, 170m, sleeping location: 47.17371, 8.52516

When we got woken up by the intense heat in our tent I put out a message on Instagram asking if there were people in the area. We packed up our tents, ate some breakfast we had from the previous day and started cycling north. 30 minutes into the day we passed an iconic landmark. The hiding spot of ben in episode 3 of hike and seek across Switzerland by jet lag: the game. There was even still a sticker of them under the slide. About 10 minutes later @upbex responded to my request on insta for people in the area and we started talking and agreed to meet up in Zug.



When we arrived in Zug we went to the train station, and after waiting for 5 minutes upbex showed up. He did however tell us that he had lost his bag in the train, filled with lockpicking equipment. We cycled to the beach while

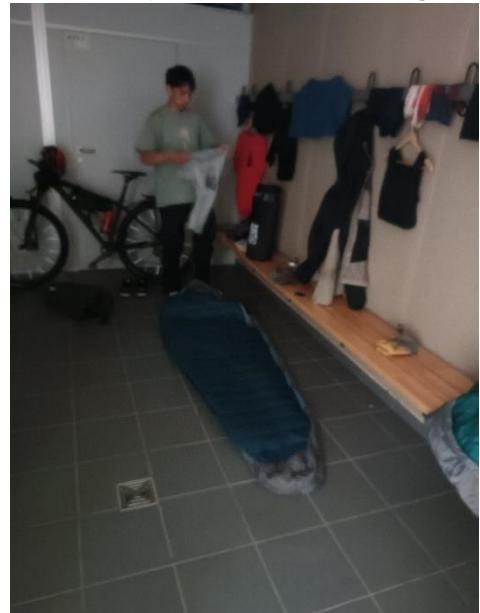
he went by bus, but half way he told me that he got a call from the train company and was going to pick up his bag from the station.  
Phew.



When me and Varenz arrived at the beach we made some lunch and made a fire just for the fun of it. When upbex finally arrived again, this time with his bag, we started changing clothes and ran into the water. Even though the days before it was 30c, the day we decided to go swim it was raining and storming, with no sun to be seen. The water was also ice cold, but still an interesting experience.

After showering for a bit and getting back into our normal clothes, we went into the city to go rooftopping. We went into a building he wanted to check out for a while, and after waiting for 20 minutes we could finally follow someone into the building. We managed to find our way to the top floor using some shims to open fire doors. When we were at the top floor, there was a big alarm and a key that we thought was to disable the alarm. We unscrewed the key box, and hotwired it. When we did though, the alarm did go off. We decided it was best to bail, but thinking back we shouldn't have because we were basically there.

We went to the opposite side of the street into a building that seemed to be open, and broke into the construction site with our bikes, to try to find a place to chill. Inside the building site we stole some tea bags, and we went out because upbex had to go home.



[later while doing my Nijmegen-Groningen trip, I met someone on the train back that apparently worked in that building for a while. What a small world]

It started raining like shit. Like the hardest rain I had ever seen. We had a go through from a warmshowers host 1 hour up the mountain, that we would be able to go to after 1 at night, because she was a nurse. Because of the harsh rain we decided not to do it, and continue searching for a spot in the city. We went to the uni campus and cooked some rice with fish and tomatoes under a big covering, yet we still got wet because of the insane amount of rain. We were walking around a bit in the slow rain periods for a good sleeping spot and ended up finding a changing room of a sports club. We went in with our bikes, locked the door from the inside, covered the motion sensors for the lights with paper napkins and went to sleep. After 5 minutes we realized the paper napkins didn't work, because the light kept turning back on. Not the best night I ever had, but at least it was dry.

## Day 6: Liechtenstein

104km, 550m, sleeping location: Camping Mittagspitze AG



After the long, but chaotic night, we cleared our stuff out, and went outside. The rain had finally cleared up and we saw a milk stand at the other side of the street. I went there, while Varenz was searching for his slipper somewhere on the ground. We started cycling north, with the optimistic goal of reaching Liechtenstein today. We were behind schedule, but by doing this we would be back on track. We started crossing the hills in the Zurich direction, and after a 300m

climb we arrived at lake Zurich. We got some snacks at a small grocery store in pfaffikon and crossed the big dike to the other side of the lake. After some shenanigans google maps showed us that there was a lot of elevation coming. At this point it was already close to dinner time so we basically gave up on the goal to reach Liechtenstein on time. But the mountains didn't come. It was a little bit of elevation, but in general the path was pretty flat. Most of the route followed the old train tracks, so they were smooth and a bit wavy. We went through some amazing tunnels and felt a lot of wind. We saw a closed gate inside one of the tunnels that a lot of wind was coming out of so we wanted to check it out. There was no handle on our side of the gate, but by using my flashlight as a extension I was able to reach the handle on the back side of the door. We opened it, put our bikes in to hide them, and started hiking to the end. When we got there we found it was the emergency exit for the train tunnel that was in use next to it. We opened the gate and stood on current in use train tracks. We waited for a train to come while watching from the gate to prevent us from being sucked in due to the strong wind.



After cycling a bit more we found ourselves at a nice small store next to the mountains and a train station. They had popcorn. It wasn't good. Or sweet. But it was nice.



When we passed the lake we realized it would only be a couple more hours of cycling until we were in Liechtenstein, so we just went for it. We went quick, to hopefully arrive before sunset, and around 6 in the evening we arrived at the Rhine; the border between Switzerland and Liechtenstein. We took some pictures here, and wanted to eat some chips. We put them on the

side of the bridge, but when we wanted to open it to eat them we saw it fly away into the river, never to be seen again.



We crossed the beautiful bridge, and started looking for a place to sleep. We went to a gas station grocery store, bought some apfelschorle and got some Nippon's as usual. About 15 minutes later we arrived at a campsite nearby, but because we were quite late the checkout

wasn't open. We picked a random spot and started cooking a bit, but apparently someone had already picked that spot. We had to move to a different spot and started chatting with some cyclists next to us that were cooking some pasta with courgetti. I don't remember where they were cycling to, but they were impressed with our distances. We set up camp and went to sleep.



## Day 7: 3 countries in 1 day

70km, 300m, Park Camping Lindau am See



When we woke up we started cycling towards the city of Vaduz, the capital of Liechtenstein. Half way there though, we came across a grocery store and decided to get some breakfast. We purchased some eggs and bread, and started baking eggs on the terrace of the restaurant next to the store, which wasn't open yet. We had some weird looks, but it was nice to eat something decent.



After arriving in Vaduz I wanted to add an extra sticker to my bike, with the flag of Liechtenstein. We cycled into the walk-only center to the tourism board and I got some tape. This was because some of the earlier stickers were peeling off. They were happy to provide it for me and were very enthusiastic about our trip. We saw some nice stuff in Liechtenstein like the historic castle on the mountain, and the nice hills. While cycling we came across the Hilti headquarters, the place where Jacob works and did his internship.

We found ourselves at a chicken stand next to a grocery store, and bought a whole chicken to eat on the bread. We felt homeless at this point because we were sitting on top of a wall, but it was very nice and had a lot of calories.



We continued and saw the border crossing back into the EU coming closer. When we finally crossed into Austria we were already in contact with Jacob. It became clear that we would not be able to go to his scouts camp this day, so we had to start searching for other stuff to do. After crossing a small bridge we saw a nice small river below us and decided to go chill at the waterfront. I made dams for over an hour, while Varenz was stacking rocks. It was relaxing, but at some point you need to continue cycling, or you will not get anywhere. We aimed on the town of Lindau, a nice scenic town with a very unique center, that is located on a island just off the actual city. We tried to reach it but after crossing the border into Germany 4 hours after leaving Liechtenstein we realized it would not be

doable. We started looking for a campsite and gave up for the day. We went to get some durum doner for the evening, and groceries for the next day while searching for a sleeping spot. At this point we had been trying to find a nice spot on the beach to just lay in a beach chair for the night. It was going to be a dry night and it was something both of us had been wanting to do for a while. After failing to find free or cheap camping spots we went to a campsite nearby, just behind a railroad crossing. This railroad crossing is not

like the ones you normally see. This one takes over 5 minutes to close and open, so this was the first, and only, time I went around the gates to go to the campsite. The parking lot was just outside of it, and had the most interesting sign ever, that still doesn't make sense to us. I don't remember if we paid for the campsite anymore, but it was a nice stay.



## Day 8: Scouts of Feldkirch

10km, 0m, Pfadfinder Leiblachtal

In the morning we aimed on reaching the town of lindau and going to Jacob later. After waking up quite early due to the amount of noise and kids on the playground, we packed up and left for the day. We cycled for 15 minutes and arrived in the town center. We went to some shops, had a look around the center and saw a zeppelin for the first time. We went to a traditional German “biergarten” which we had too, because we were now in Germany. We ordered a big 0.5L weizen and a plate of currywurst mit pommes each. Expensive but DEFINITELY good food. Around 12:30 I messaged Jakob that we were done here and would like to visit him now, but yet again, he didn't respond.



By stalking the Instagram page of their scouts group (Pfadfinder und pfadfinderinnen rheinfeld) I managed to find where they were staying, and after cycling for just 30 minutes back into Austria we surprised them. They wished us a warm welcome and let us sleep inside in their hut. We helped entertain the kids a bit, helped them cook food, which they prepared inside of a self made stone and mud oven. The leaders of their group made food for us which we all ate together, and in the evening we helped being “watch guards” and shining flashlights at the kids. Was a fun, and relaxing day.



## Day 9: Germany

57km, 1000m, Alpsee Wellness Camping

I don't remember this day very well. If I look at the route it was probably pretty exhausting, also due to the heat. But idk anymore.



I had my chain go off and a farmer help me get it back on.

Some cows looked at us a bit funny

We had a very nice view of the lake.

We ate pizza

We went to a very expensive 5 star campsite, which was too expensive for us so of course we didn't pay. That was it for this day.



## Day 10: Angry Austrians

70km, 900m, Drei-Tannen-Stadion Reutte

This day was our second day in Germany during this trip. We started the day by trying to get out of the campsite unseen, so we didn't have to pay. We went to the nearest grocery store, which had an amazing café inside. We got some bread, jam, coffee, and other nice stuff. We sat there for almost 2 hours just enjoying the relaxation, and putting off cycling because of the heat.



We started cycling quite late, and did quite some kilometers. We went past nice lakes, rivers, towns and weird looking very high Christmas trees. After about 50km we arrived in the town of Füssen, which was very beautiful. We went through the middle of the center, and came out on the other side with a view of fort Neuschwanstein. We hadn't yet found a nice sleeping spot, so we just continued cycling until we would find something. Not wanting to cycle something

we had already done before, we decided to go via the gravel road next to the Alpsee, which was very hard but fun. We had a nice descent, and when we arrived in Reutte a bit later, we decided

to get some good food. We wanted to get Kaiserschmarrn but couldn't find it anywhere in town, so we decided to just get schnitzel.

After this nice dinner, we started to browse google maps for a campsite or place to wildcamp in this town, and finally found a campsite. It looked to be quite okay on google maps with somewhat decent reviews, but when we arrived nobody was there, and some semi-permanent structures were left, with the woonwagens taken out. When we were sure it was not possible to sleep there, we had to hurry up to find a sleeping location, because we saw thunderclouds coming closer. We saw that there was a football stand just north of this, so we hopped on the bike as quickly as possible and went there.

When we got there it was clear that we weren't welcome here either, but we had no other choice. We walked around the back with the bikes in our hands and found a hole in the fence. We walked into the field and climbed up the stands with our bikes. At the top we set up camp a bit to combat against the wind while thunder was striking just hundreds of meters away from us. We started playing "zweeds pesten", but about 15 minutes into the game we saw flashlights with 2 guys and a dog walking around the field. We hid for a bit, but when there were clearly coming our way we stood up and wanted to explain our story. He came up to us screaming obviously very angry, but I managed to calm him down and let me explain myself. Just as I said I had no money for a hotel, the campsite was closed and I didn't want to sleep outside due to the thunder, lightning struck on the other side of the field and he understood our reasoning. He



explained he was not allowed to allow this, but would for this time and this time only. He showed us where we could find water and a toilet, so we put down our sleeping mats, finished the game of zweeds pesten and went to bed.



## Day 11: Rain

35km, 700m, Ganghofer Rast schutzhutte

When we woke up, everything around us was wet. It was raining very hard, and would be for the coming hours. Luckily we only had around 30km to do, because the day after Varenz was taking the bus back to Eindhoven. We packed our bags, went to shit and get some water at the toilet of the playing field, and cycled 5



minutes to the nearest store. It turned out to have a café inside, which was very good for us. We bought some breakfast there. Varenz got coffee, while I got Fanta as usual. We sat there for HOURS while charging our devices and just waiting for the sky to clear up.

At around 13:00 we started to cycle east with the plan to sleep somewhere high up the Zugspitze. We went south following the river, but because the main road was very busy we had to go on the sideroad. And what a sideroad it was. After passing under the highline179, a 110m high 410m long pedestrian bridge we carried on up the 15% incline only stopping when I had to wait for Varenz, drinking some water, or seeing the



biggest cricket I have ever seen. This thing was enormous. Like a couple solid centimeters tall and 10cm long. We cycled around some signs saying we could not go there by bike, but because we saw pedestrians we thought we were in the clear. Which was the case, but we did find out why it was not allowed. The little bit of pavement we crossed over was so

fresh, that it was still warm, my tires stuck to it and I could put dents in it with just my finger. Just after all of a sudden the road changed from this nice asphalt, to a swept away riverbank with crazy gores and standing water everywhere. It was hard, but unique and rewarding.

At some point we finally arrived at a flatter portion and decided to cycle to the lake nearby to have a bit of a rest and viewpoint. There was a campsite here, and we briefly discussed sleeping here after only having cycled for 20km but we decided against it. We did however chill in the playground here and almost break our neck on some children attractions. That was fun.

We decided we needed to get some lunch so at the nearest shop we stopped and decided to eat something different for a change. Instead of the same old bread, we got a cake bottom, some



strawberries and a can of whipped cream. Because when cycling, you need calories. We assembled this into a monstrosity of 3500 calories and splitted it for lunch. And yes the whole can of whipped cream ended up in our bellies one way or another. And also yes of course we got more Nippon's :)





After lunch we had a nice slow decent into the valley and cycled a signed mtb route. It was a bit too steep for us, so we chose to try to get to the main road. After being sent back by a farmer we decided there was a reason for the signs, and went the official route. It was beautiful, but quite rough. We further dropped down into the valley, which was again a beautiful nice smooth gravel track, with awesome views of the Zugspitze coming closer. We quickly hopped into a grocery store to get some food for a BBQ we wanted to do as a last proper dinner together up on the mountain, so we got some sausages, spareribs, baguettes, beers and eggs.

Because we were very tired at this point after the rough night before, we decided not to kill ourselves and take the ski lift up. Finally up on the mountain there were goats, cows, horses and sheep everywhere. We cycled up quite a bit more on a off road track occasionally being passed by a very fast Lada Niva jumping around on the trail. We were planning to sleep in a

shelter at the top of the mountain, so when we arrived there we set up camp. We built a fire, which we had to keep down because it is very illegal to do so in Austria, and you could get a big fine. We baked some baguettes next to the fire, but because of the rain earlier all wood was wet. This caused there to be a lot of smoke which could give away our location to the mountain guards so we eventually let the fire go out and baked the rest in my pan. We had some nice sausages, and baked half of the sparerib. Since we were now in Austria, and Varenz had never eaten Kaiserschmarrn I decided we had to make it ourself. Earlier at the store I picked up a packet of mix and I started preparing it. We put some eggs in our pan, the mix, and some water and baked it in our pan. It was okay but definitely not the best. Very fun though. It was a bit much however so we had 4 eggs and half of a sparerib left. We cleaned the area a bit up, put our mats down and went to rest for the night.



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## Day 12: The final day together.

60km, 400m, Camping Pizzeria Stigger



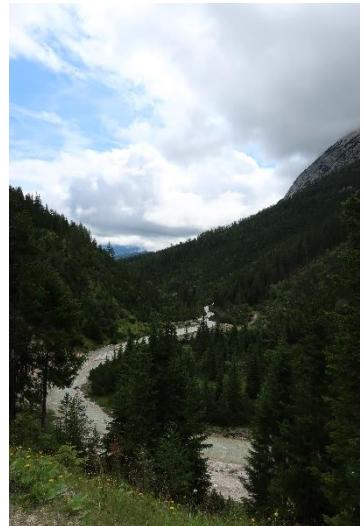
We got woken up by some hikers passing by early in the morning. We got up and started preparing the spareribs and eggs that were left from the day before. We ate it together with some bread we still had laying around and hit the road. Or more like hit the dirt, because this was barely a road. We flowed through the beautiful mountains over narrow tracks passing the occasional hiker. After having gone down the whole part we did the day before we continued east down some amazing trails. At some point I hit 55km/h on gravel and didn't see the corner coming. I almost ran myself off the road and hit the outer bank. I ALMOST fell, but

was able to save myself from dying and falling off the mountain. Definitely a wake up call. We realized we had to take a shit however, and didn't feel like doing so in nature again. We went to a



nearby mountain restaurant, the tiffusalm. It was there that I wanted to show Varenz what kaisersmarrn was, but sadly they did not offer it here for some reason. We got a beer however (at 10 in the morning)(it was our final day together okay) and continued with the day. We had around 1500m of altitude to drop this day, so we had quite a high speed day. We cycled through beautiful mountain towns, paths, rivers and valleys. Around 12 we arrived in a town and now really felt like kaisersmarrn. We cycled through the town of "Seefeld im

tirol" and were luckily able to find some there. Varenz loved it, and we had a beautiful view while lunching. We continued our way to try to find a campsite for me to stay on the last night. I would love to have gone wildcamping,



but since Varenz had his bus (or so we thought) leaving at 11 I was more comfortable having a sleeping location be certain. When we arrived at the first campsite we met some other cyclists that we recognized from back in Switzerland. Such a small world. I dropped some stuff, and we cycled to the city together. We visited the inner city, and had dinner at McDonald's per varenz's request. Afterwards we started heading back to the campsite. I set up my tent, and we both showered. When the time came, we started heading back to the city to drop Varenz off in the bus.

Like I explained before, Varenz had forgotten his ID card back home. While they did not check it on the way to Switzerland, that could not be further from the truth for the way back. After stressing a bit while waiting for the bus the time finally came that he could go in. He showed the bus driver his ticket, driving license, his dad on a video call with his ID, we got another bus driver, we had another dutch person and Austrian person try to help, but nothing worked. The driver could not be convinced. The bus drove away without him. After helping searching for other options, we decided going back by train was the easiest. It cost him about 10 hours on top of the original 20 and about 180 bucks extra, but he managed to get home. I cycled back to my campsite and went to bed. End good all good.



## Dag 13: First day alone (Brenner pass)

95km, 1180m, Camping Löwenhof



went to get some bread and stuff to put on the bread. I started cycling the path next to the river to Innsbruck for the 5<sup>th</sup> time now, after doing it 2x and back the evening before. Right before the city center I turned right and started the great ascent up the Brenner, all the way to Italy.



While still at home I had planned out the



complete route of this vacation, with some changes I could make along the way in mind. This meant I had a nice mix of quiet asphalt roads and nice gravel paths. I went through some beautiful towns, plucked some berries, and met quite a lot of cyclists in the beginning. Around 10km up, I met a duo of a Father and Son cycling from Munich to Venice. The kid was around 10, and only had a football with him, while the father had all of the luggage on his bike and on a trailer. We went to a farmers stand on the side of the road to eat something and hide from the intense heat. I ate a full bushel of carrots and some yoghurt, and the father and son drank



some milk. They were a bit slower than me, so we parted ways and I started going further up. After 2 hours I had cycled only 15km, but with 500m of altitude difference, It was very rough and steep, but fun. I saw signs beside the road everywhere with calls of action to the government to install a proper cycle path. There were a lot of cyclists here, but the roads kept getting wider, faster and less visible. I met some gravel cyclists along the way and cycled with them for an hour. They were brothers from Munchen and were teachers. They told me a lot of different stories about trips, but they were lighter, more athletic, and gravel bikes instead of my mountain bike, so they were too fast for me. I told them we should split ways, so I went to the side of the road to get a brake. After 15 minutes I continued again and just 200m later I met them again, this time with 2 flat tires. I asked them what happened but they had no idea. I helped them, and we both went our own speeds again.



Afterwards I met a lot of other cyclists. Some slower than me, but most much faster. That's what you get from going on a 30kg mtb. At lunchtime I had done 1000m of altitude and 45km of distance, and I arrived at the border of Austria and Italy, in the small border town of Brenner. I decided I wanted to cycle together with someone again, and since I had seen a lot of cyclists going up the Brenner earlier this day I waited at the top until I met someone. I got in contact with a couple that were going until Bolzano

via merino. We cycled together for a bit with some very nice paths and towns, but at some point everything has to come to an end. We split up again, and I continued the journey alone. I continued on some parallel roads next to the



highway. At some point the gravel just stopped and I was forced to go onto the main road. And this was not a main road like I was used to cycling on. This was a full on highway, with the only difference being that cars were only allowed to go 90km/h. I am 100% sure though that most were going at least 130. I was cycling on the shoulder (and this was an official route) and felt like I was going to die every second. There were even still off ramps and on ramps, so I had to



make sure I didn't cut off a car and get sideswiped. Was horrible. I started looking for a place to sleep, and because this was such a hot and exhausting day I decided to go for a campsite. I arrived here quite early compared to other days, which was a good thing because it was really busy. A lot of other cyclists and nice people. I started cooking at a picnic table on the campsite and a elderly couple, also cycling joined me. We watched the football match together and shared some experiences. I did a tan line check and realized I had also gotten crazy buff this vacation, even though I wasn't even half way yet. Afterwards I hopped in the shower and went to bed very early, Ready for a big day tomorrow.



## Day 14: Passo Gardena

65km, 1400m, Camping Calfosch Almi



I woke up very late because I was apparently very tired. I packed up all my stuff while most people were already gone. The only people remaining was a group of around 15 people with parents and children, all by bike. I went to the Lidl on the opposite side of the road and got some

breakfast. After I went to the bike shop nearby to fix some bolts that came a bit loose under my saddle. I continued the beautiful route through the historical town of Brixen, and went further south to go east near Chiusa. From there the climb really started. A constant 5-10% up, for the next 30km. I arrived at the bottom of a ski lift and realized I was too lazy to go up by bike, and the lift was very cheap. I cheated for the next 400m of altitude, and ended up at 2300m of altitude. Unlike last time in Switzerland with 2m of snow, here it was sunny, yet still a bit cold. I went down some amazingly flowy singletracks and wanted to go down the entire valley. Half way though I realized I had dropped my jbl clip 4



somewhere, but since I had already done about 500m of descent I gave up on the dream of retrieving it and continued my descent. The asphalt road down was very steep and smooth so I decided to roll down it



instead of going unpaved. After this the descent was smooth sailing and I went down all the way until the campsite, near the town of Corvara in badia. I was cooking some food, drinking some beers and having some Haribo and then I went to bed. Btw never go to this campsite if you don't want to pay 35 euros per night. It did have the most amazing views of this whole trip, of course excluding the Jochpass.



## Day 15: sketchy barber + pizza

50km, 900m, Campeggio "Alfonsine" (Christian camp)



I woke up quite early to the sound of cows and birds walking and flying around. I was one of the first of the tents to wake up. I started packing but was chilling in the sun for a bit too long. I took a selfie and realized how long my beard had gotten. That was something that needed to change. Most days before cycling I had a goal thought out I wanted to reach but here I didn't. I made a quick plan on excel and decided I needed to go about 50km per day, which is not a lot. I started cycling and at the same time looking for barbers. The first one had a 1 hour wait time, which was too much for me. I then found another one on google maps with just 13 reviews on someone's home address. I arrived there, and put my bike against a tree. I



knocked on the door and a grumpy non-English speaking elderly man came out. I was let in and showed him with some hand signals I wanted my beard shaved. He said something like 5 and I assumed it was the price (it was). He put me in a chair, put on a lab coat, glasses, a face mask and gloves. It looked and felt like I had ended up in a scene of the breaking bad. Was intense. He started shaving which was actually quite nice. I had never been shaven, only shaved myself. He asked me for cash so I went to my bike to search for some. I gave him a 5 euro bill and continued the trip.

After this \*unique\* experience I had gotten burning hot, since it was over 30 degrees already, even in the morning. I didn't bring any white shirts in my dumb mind, so I went to the next town to search for one. I ended up picking one with the "alte badia" text, before even knowing that was the name of the region. Nice souvenir.





Up to here was all a nice smooth descent, around 2% down. But that was gonna change. I had to rise around 800m the next 10km. It was rough, but fun. Beautiful views and amazing roads. Dried out riverbeds looking out over wild mountains. Looking to the side I found the valley I was originally planning on going through. The evening before I had decided I was not going to attempt it, and looking at it now I am happy I didn't. I ascended the long windy road up the Val Parola, which took me



quite some time. There were a lot of road works so places you had to wait for traffic lights since only one lane was open. On the entire ascent there were a lot of motorcycles waving around, and when arriving close to the top 2 motorcycles came from the other side. They were in full tracksuit with racing bikes, and I have never seen anyone go through a corner that fast. They were leaning and their knee was hitting the pavement. Very sick to see (and hear).



All the way finally at the top it looked like a rocky desert. I put on the song “a horse with no name” because it felt like it fit the vibe of the place perfectly. I did scout this area out on google maps, but it looks more amazing in real life. I took a piss here, ate something and continued on. At the top of this pass was a bit of a plateau, unlike most other passes. I was just taking in the beauty around me and the

descent already started. A nice, quite steep descent all the way into the picturesque town of Cortina D'ampezzo. In the beginning I was stuck behind some cars and a bus, but since I was faster than them I passed all of them in one straight path. Next I was stuck behind a slow driver, together with a Ferrari. We passed at the same time and it felt so cool. Once he got the space he was obviously way faster than me, but not even a minute later we met again. This time stuck behind a group of donkeys with a donkey herder. I had never laughed so hard in my life. It was amazing. After the long descent parallel to some ski lifts I arrived in cortina. There I visited a quite big shopping center in search for a new speaker. After much searching I ended up finding a jbl go 3 and a locking carabiner, to replace my clip that fell off the day before. My saddle was also a bit loose again so at a bicycle rental shop I borrowed a torx key and was able to tighten it. And before I ask myself why I didn't just use the one I had with me, it didn't have this specific size.





During this trip I had a couple goals in mind. One of them was to bake a pizza somewhere. I did message some pizzerias beforehand but none of them responded. Because it was only 5 o'clock I decided to cycle to the next town and try this. I went 11km further and arrived in San Vito di Cadore, this time with music. It was a really nice gradual gravel decent.



Once being in the town I went to the

local pizzeria and just plain asked told the barista my plan. She was a bit confused at first but after saying I had cycled there from Switzerland with the goal of making a pizza, and also being a pizzaiolo back home she loved the idea. After a bit of waiting for the main cook to arrive I started talking to him about pizza. He wasn't the best at English and I am even worse at Italian, so the barista translated a bit for me. I helped cut some vegetables and then went up to the oven side of the kitchen. I took out a piece of dough and started pressing it into a disk. I then threw it into the air, turned around and caught it again. They were not expecting it, but it was fun. I then put it down and started making a pizza key on it. Key is the son of my boss, but also my favorite pizza back home. It is with mushrooms, spicy salami and gorgonzola. Sadly however the mushrooms were canned and the oven was electric. I would have expected better from an Italian pizzeria. I put it in the oven, and after turning it around and waiting for a couple minutes it was done. The barista asked me for something to drink, so as usual I got a Fanta. After eating this amazing pizza I wanted to pay them, but was not allowed to. Not even for the drink. Thinking back I should have asked the barista if it was possible to sleep at her place since at this point I was still looking for a spot to stay for the night, but life is life.

On OpenStreetMap I could see a campsite not far away from this town. I went there, but when I arrived there was a bigger group of people than I expected. I talked with them and figured out this was apparently a church camp. I asked if I could put up my tent, hoping for another free night and was happy they said yes. But apparently this was just a sort of normal campsite, because the owners came up to me 10 minutes later and asked what I was doing. I had to pay like 20 bucks but was still able to sleep there luckily. I cooked some more pasta because during these bikepacking days you need to eat, and walked to the river nearby. I realized it was too cold to take a plunge and I'm a pussy so I went back and got in my tent to go to sleep.



# Day 16: Sunrise express + scouts

60km, 1000m, Campo scout Forni di Sotto

Lets start off by saying this was not a sunrise express for me :)

I woke up to the sounds of the church kids next to me. They were singing some nice songs, but way too early for me. I relaxed for a bit in the colder hours of the day and started packing up. I cycled next to the beautiful (nameless?) river for most of the day and around lunch time I met some other cyclists. They were on full suspension mountainbikes, with 2 guys and one girl. Both the guys were from Romania, and the woman was a friend of them from the UK.



@avramar @emyyyg16 @alexanda.zamfirache. They had to be in Ljubljana in just a couple of days, averaging 100km per day. They had slept in Cortina the night before so had only done a slight bit more distance than me this day. We cycled together for a while and went to a café on the road for them to have a coffee and me to take a shit. After 15 minutes we continued on with the route and around the evening I was looking for a sleeping spot while they continued on for a bit. I saw there was a scouts location just besides the road a bit later so I told the group that I was going to split with them there.

When I finally saw tents besides the road I said goodbye to my new found friends and went into the path leading to the tents. I couldn't see any leaders, only kids, so I talked to one of the kids and they pointed me to the leaders tent. After explaining my story they were very welcoming. I did not even have to put up my tent because they had one ready for me. They explained that they were a girls only catholic scouts group but that I was very welcome there. Sadly they did not have a shower so I hopped into the (very cold) river to clean up a bit. Around dinner time I had some food together with the leaders and exchanged some nice stories. Most of them barely spoke any English but one of them did. After our dinner, which was homemade pasta/potatoes (still have no idea) we went to try the kids' food. They cooked on mud furnaces and made some pretty good tasting dinner. They were singing some songs and having a good time, which was very nice, but also very different from the way we do it here. Everything was very quiet, relaxed and no chaos. All scouts camps here are very chaotic with people running around, screaming and people stressing about the food. In the evening we sat next to the fire and they started singing some songs. I did get a text book but could barely read anything that it said. They read stories about the stars all



in a very relaxed vibe. One of the leaders started reading, and when she did not want to anymore she just stopped, and someone else just started reading. No communication, just started. We could learn something from this. Because I was very tired I went to sleep a bit earlier and let them have their evening to themselves. Thanks for this amazing day @scoutfse\_tarcento @\_franci.liu\_

I am still in contact with Franci and she later told me that all the leaders were also very excited to see me because they had not seen any men for a couple of weeks, and then this adventurous guy just comes to them.

## Day 17: Fire, beer and trains

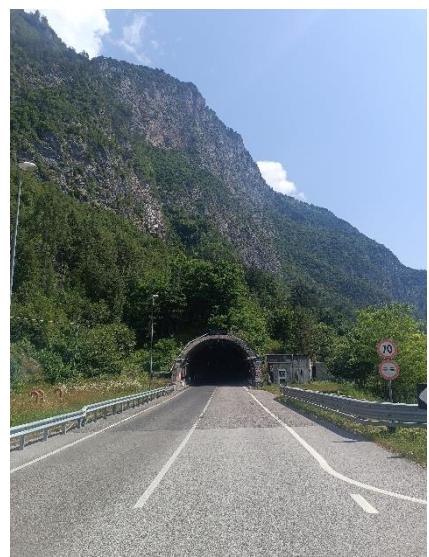
70km, 500m, Stazione di chiusaforte



After waking up for the second day by the sound of Christians practicing their religion I packed up my stuff. This didn't take long since I didn't have to pack up a tent. I chatted with the leaders for a bit again and got some breakfast from them. They gave me some snacks for on the road, I filled up my water and continued on. At this point it was already burning hot but I just had to continue. After just a short distance I arrived at a

tunnel, and not a small tunnel. Normally you could go around, but here I had to go through or bike 100km extra. I put on my reflective vest, added extra flashing red lights to my bike and went into the 2.2km long tunnel, with a 70km/h speed limit and barely a side to cycle on. I am very sure this wasn't allowed, but I just pushed on and luckily made it to the other side without dying. A normal car was fine and kept its distance, but trucks were zooming past me less than half a meter away from me and their wind was pulling me to the side.

I cycled in the Tagliamento river valley for the whole day. It is a beautiful super wide river bed (~1km wide) with just a tiny stream of water in it. Since all the water is molten snow it is quite cold, so I was debating whether or not I wanted to hop in. Earlier during my research of the trip I came across a huge abandoned bunker on the other side of the river, so along the route I crossed over the river via a gas line bridge and tried to get in. I climbed all around and tried all angles, but sadly no luck. I went back and because it was 34 degrees at this point the best course of action was to just jump in the water. I went below the gas line, put my bike away and switched into my shorts. I hid my phone, GPS and wallet and locked the bike, and went into the water. It was quite cold, but good enough for me. Super strong currents but very fun and beautiful.





After getting back on the bike and hanging my shorts on the back to dry I pedaled to Tolmezzo. This is quite a decently sized city, so SUPER hot because of all the concrete and asphalt. I accepted, got some food at the store and continued on cycling east. I had planned some military abandoned stuff on this route, and came across some barracks. Sadly they didn't look very promising so I continued on. I went into town to get some ice cream and charge my electronics. I have never had such a good ice cream. I went back a second time to get another one. Just plain amazing. After my phone was a bit more full I made my way to the next area I had on my map. There was a closed off road with a tunnel, but luckily there was a hole in the fence and I could go



through. This didn't lead to where I thought I would, but instead to a bunker that was above the tunnel. I went in and took some nice pics here. I wish I would have slept at such a bunker at some point, but that's for next year. I continued on the road and went out the blockage on the other side. I crossed one of the widest part of the river and found myself on a beautiful cycle path that apparently headed all the way to Munich. After a bit of following this river I ended up at Stazione di Chiusaforte. It is a old station on the cycle path that used to be a railway, and its focused on

bikepackers. I found them via warmshowers and am very happy I did. When I arrived there was already a very relaxed vibe. Some people drinking some beers at the bar, and a couple setting up their tent in the garden. I asked the counter and indeed, I was able to put up my tent in their garden for free, and also take a shower (although cold). After putting up my tent I started chatting to the cook, who although cooking for a bikepacking focused restaurant never did it before. I gave him some tips and we exchanged some nice stories. He had to clean up, but after he did he came back with 2 amazing looking and tasting panino's. A piece of baguette with nice Italian toppings. This was very nice and we drank a beer. And another one. (already one liter). He sadly had to go home, so I started chatting to some already drunk Germans on a cycling trip. They gave me beers for days and tried to give me some shots as well. I refused however since I don't drink hard alcohol. We drank until very late, and when I got in my tent around 2 o clock I was very drunk and everything was shaking. Great evening.



## Day 18: Hell

20km, 350m, Hotel Baita



I arrived at a beautiful old bridge the railway I was cycling on used to run over. I climbed non top (as usual) and after looking at the view for a bit I started to feel better. I did notice however that the sky started to look a bit dark and noted on my weather app that it was

Good morning. Or well. Not so good morning. I woke up at 12, sweaty from the heat caused by the sun shining into my tent, and still hungover from the evening before with the Germans. When I got out of the tent almost all other tents on the garden were already gone and there were other cyclists already driving by and having a drink at the restaurant. I dropped down onto the main road and went to the only grocery store open in the surrounding 25km. Got some breakfast there and went onto my day. I continued cycling the alpe adria cycling route in the direction of Slovenia. Still a bit hungover



“going to rain just a little bit”. The route also had some other beautiful bridges, tunnels and was carved into the side of the mountain at some parts. Absolutely magnificent. I passed by another bunker, this time planned. Before I started with this trip I had found a map of all of the bunkers of this region, which used to protect Italy from a invasion by nazis through the alps, as this is one of the rare passes from Austria into Italy that is doable by tank. I went down into the bunker, which was absolutely massive. Only spent around 30 minutes in there since I was already a bit behind schedule but it was very nice (and finally a bit cooler 😊).



At 16:00 some drops of rain fell out of the sky, for the first time in 2 weeks. From there it all started to go downhill. First my cellular connection stopped working. After I fixed that (still don't know what was wrong) the rain started to get a bit harder. I had only cycled like 20km at this point, but because the rain was supposed to stop just 30 minutes later I decided to hide for shelter under a bridge and cook some food.

While the pasta was boiling I started to look for a potential spot to sleep, since the rain time kept extending. I was just next to a elevated highway and was looking for a shelter place under there. I couldn't find much, so I went back to my bike. The pasta was done so I added some tuna and ate for the evening. Half way during eating I realized my front tire had gone flat. I tried to take my front wheel off to fix it





but just couldn't manage it. The axle was super tight and with my small multi tool there was no way it was coming off. Luckily at that point a military police car drove by and asked me what I was doing, so I explained my problem and they looked in the nearby town for a way they could help me. I pumped up my tire (still a hole in it) and was able to cycle to the town, which was just 500m away. By the time I arrived my tire was already flat. The police guys had found a bike repair station so I put my bike on the mount and tried to take the axle off with the tools on the stand. It was also a little tool, but apparently less strong than mine. When I put some force on it the whole multitool exploded and I realized that taking the axle off was not going to be possible. This meant that I had to take the outer tire off, and patch the inner tube. I would wish that I was able to just put on a new tube since I didn't have a lot of time but that was no

option because of the wheel problem. I was finally able to take out the thorn stuck in my wheel which caused the puncture, and patch the hole.

When that was fixed I made my way back to the cycle path. On the way I passed over a big bridge, and the river combined with the dark clouds made for the best picture I have ever made. It was fucking amazing. I even printed it out and is now hanging on a canvas on my wall at home. When I reached the path it started to rain a bit more again. Because the weather apps listed just a bit of rain I decided to hide again, but it wasn't the best rain even more. I headed to (again) but even here I was. By now this had turned into hardest rain I had ever seen, put on my rain jacked, and closest hotel (3 stars) options, and stood outside hotel to come. I was wet like hood to between my toes. Finally someone from the into the hallway. He full but was very apologetic the area. When that was no

under the bridge for a bit hiding spot and it started to the elevated highway spot getting rained on constantly. a full on storm with the that actually hurt on my skin. I braced for hell. I went to the because I had no other waiting for someone from the a dog from my hair under my and was literally leaking water. hotel came out and invited me explained that the hotel was and called all other hotels in succes they walked with me to their garage, where I could put my bike. There was also a spare bed in the hallway there, and a shower. This shower was clearly never used because there was stuff inside of it, but at least it was a shower. I thanked them heavenly and showered, hung out all my clothes and hopped in bed very early.



# Day 19: Lets hit Slovenia!

61km, 610m, Camping Perun Lipce

A lot of sounds. I didn't know where they were coming from because I was still half asleep. When I woke up a bit more, very early in the morning, it turned out to be people walking to the hotel lobby for breakfast. Since I was in the spare bed at the bottom of the stairs I heard everything very well. I decided this was my call to get out of bed so got up, and got ready for the day. When I put on my shoes, shirt and bivy they were still wet, even though they had hung inside the whole night. I put my bike outside the front door and went to the main desk to pay. But when I got there the lady looked very confused. She said that I was not allowed to pay and should take as much breakfast as I want, even if I wanted to take some with me. So that's exactly what I did. I filled my stomach with croissants, bread, and a lot of other tasty stuff. You don't often have this luxury while bikepacking, but here I did :)



I got back on the bike heading back to the cycle path for the 3th time. The hotel was right next to the bike repair station so by this point I knew the town quite well. On my way to the cycle path I saw the biggest electricity pylon I had ever seen, with amazing ladders and HAD to hit it. I climbed up a bit (like 20m) but then saw some people pointing at me with phones in their hand. It was a nice climb while it lasted...

After I got back onto the path I followed it for a bit until I passed by a pump track. There were some kids playing here, but I went quick over the pump track, hit some jumps (still with bags) and the kids and their parents seemed very impressed. I continued, and after a bit went right off the path into town. This town was located on one of the main entry points into Italy from Austria,

which meant that there were a LOT of bunkers here. When I passed the overpass I realized I had lost my sunglasses. These were gifted to me by someone I met on road and were meant to at least make it back to home. Sadly they did not :(

I dumped my bike into some bushes and went to what I had noted on one of my maps as a bunker. After walking through some bushes I could not find it until I noticed some fake rocks. This turned out to be the entrance to this amazingly big bunker. It was in a pretty good condition for being left alone for around 80 years, and there was still copper everywhere.

I visited some other bunkers, and other military reminiscent in the area, and in one I found the biggest snail I had ever seen. He was like 20cm long, and 4cm thick. Looked like someone took a dump but it was a snail.

Following the cycle path I passed by some more abandoned infrastructure, including a old station. I explored it for a bit, and then went off the cycle path on my way to Slovenia. On my way I found myself on the parking lot of a concert by Manu Chao (me gustas tu and other songs). It was the next day, and if I had just a bit more time (and money) I would have gone watch him live. Just 2km later I found myself at the



border of Italy and Slovenia. Time for another sticker on my bike. At exactly the same time that I crossed the border it started to rain. Luckily it didn't last for long.

A new country also means a new language. And of this language I understood even less than Italian. Words like "okrepcevalnica" said nothing to me. Just after the border was a nice town I visited to buy some ice cream and get some groceries. After this I followed the river quite far and started searching for a camping spot. Since I had decided on a rest day I wanted to find something cheap because I would need to pay for 2 nights. I stranded down at a campsite just next to the river and started putting up my tent. Right next to my tent a small Citroën c1 was parked out of which came a solo girl. I started talking to her and we quickly realized she was also Dutch. She was on a solo vacation and had driven a couple thousand kilometers in the little car already. Interesting story, but we had some nice conversations and went to bed.



## Day 20: rest day (Lago di bled)

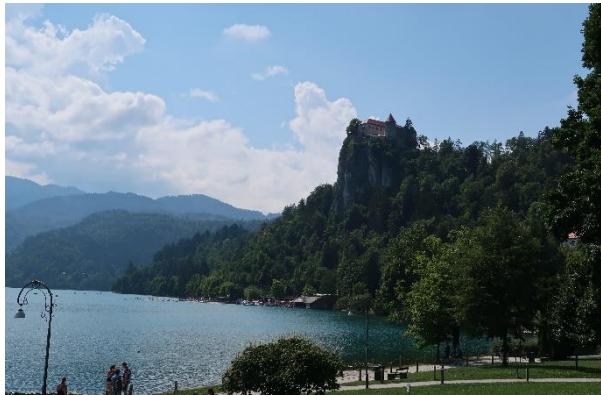
25km, 400m, same spot as the night before.

I was now very close to Lago di Bled, a beautiful lake with a church in the center. After waking up very late in my now super hot tent I went to the campsite staff to ask for a coin for the washing machine. After a lot of troubles with it not working I was able to start it and clean all of my clothes. I dried everything on a rack, which went very quickly

because it was already above 30c and after I put everything away I hopped on my bike. It was very quick uphill, because I had left basically all of the weight back at the campsite.



On my way to the lake I chose a "sightseeing" route as you say in Dutch. I had navigated with OpenStreetMap, but it sent me through a super steep unclimbable valley. I cycled down the super steep stairs while hikers were looking at me like I was a flying sheep. I managed to find my way down, and now had to make my way up. It was here that I realized I was very happy I was doing this, because otherwise I would have needed to do this with a heavy bike. I pushed my bike up a bit and cycled my way to the lake. Once there I got some ice cream and lunch. It was **very**





expensive and **very** busy. A perfect touristy area. Normally I avoid these areas but because I was so close it was still a nice visit. I started cycling around the lake and took some beautiful pictures along the way while looking for a spot to jump in the water. At the complete other side of the lake I jumped in the nice warm water and cooled off a bit from the sun. I put on my normal clothes again, and once I left the lake area it was already around 17:00. I cycled past a pizza restaurant and decided spending money was now my #1 hobby. I put my bike down and started chatting with some other dutchies. We exchanged stories, drank some beers and when it was time to go it was already 2 hours later. I went back to the campsite, and after a bit of chatting to the girl again I went to sleep.

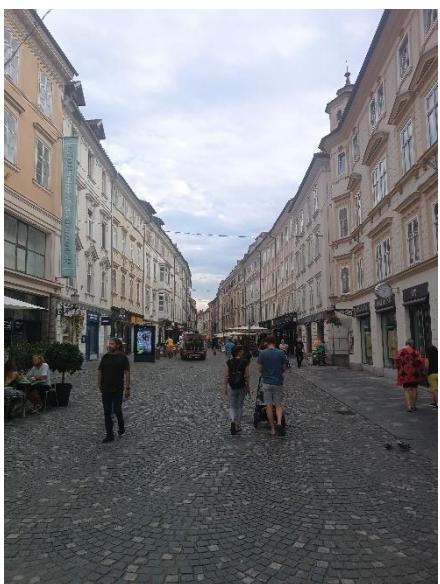


## Day 21: Ljubljana

63km, 410m, warmshowers host

Good morning. I woke up quite early because I went to bed early the day before. Feeling a bit refreshed because of the rest day I went to the campsite shop to pick up the breakfast I had ordered the day before. It was a full baguette and a pain au chocolate. I posted a story on my

Instagram telling people I was gonna be in Ljubljana this day, and a kind follower responded (@popowiczlukasz). On my way to the big city I passed by a shopping center and got some lunch. At the campsite I was at before I was not able to charge devices overnight (total ass move by the campsite) so my powerbank was mostly empty. I put it to charge inside the McDonald's and went into the



grocery store. I got some lunch and once outside I called some friends. I then continued on to the big city, and in the outskirts I had organized to meet with Lukas. We went to a café, got something to drink and talked for a while. He then

brought me to a bakery and gave me some burek. It was heaven, and definitely not the last time I ate it. Once I made my way into the city center I visited some touristy highlights and started cooking some pasta in a park. I then received a message on warmshowers telling me someone responded. It turned out to be a very kind guy back near the café we were at before who was going to host me, so I made my way over there. I had never used warmshowers before so didn't



know what to expect, but he cooked me dinner (even though I had already eaten). I ate some of it, but was already super tired and went to sleep in his spare bedroom. Good night.

## Day 22: Infiltration and amazing warmshowers

110km, 500m, warmshowers host

I woke up, still in this guys apartment. He was already ready to leave, but I just woke up. Apparently there had been a miscommunication. He meant that he was going to leave at 8 from his home, while I understood to wake up at 8. After packing my stuff up hastily and not having eaten breakfast yet, I was basically kicked out. I went to the nearest store to get some breakfast; a Aldi. I got some basic breads there and some apple juice, and continued on with the day. I had quite some distance to cover so the first 24km was done in one hour. At this pace I would arrive in no time, but sadly this didn't continue. I had terrible ass pain, but kept on pushing. There were some nice roads next to the river and train tracks, so the day was quite smooth sailing. After around 35km I saw some very obvious bikepacking bikes next to the road and after looking around for a bit I found the owners. They were 2 Chileans traveling around Europe for a couple months by bike. I got talking to them and we cycled together for the next couple of kilometers. I decided it was lunch time so I went to a bakery quite close to the road in the town of litja and picked up some burek. I went to a little ledge next to the big river the Sava, and ate my burek there. I talked with some kids, and saw a lot of little what looked like beavers playing around on the edge of the water. I started looking it up because I thought beavers didn't live in this part of Europe and I was correct. They turned out to be a bit smaller, with thinner round tails instead of flat like in a beaver. It turned out to be a nutria (beverrat). Very interesting and cute animals.



Just an hour later I passed by the Trbovlje power station. It used to be a lignite power plant, with the highest chimney in Europe, but now shut down. I went into the main entrance and was talking to the security guard asking if I could go in. He did not allow it so I continued on with my route. Just 15 minutes later I realized I made a wrong decision, and turned around. I messaged a friend about if he knew anything about the plant but he did not know too much about it. When I had come around to the back of the station I put my bike in some bushes, switched clothing, cam battery and SD card, put on my scarf and went in. I jumped over some fences and sneaked through the entire forest for a kilometer,

dodging fences everywhere. Since there were people driving around on ground level I wanted to go into the station via one of the conveyers. Sadly however they were all closed off pretty well. After finally climbing into one (after an hour of trying) I felt like I had almost reached the finish line. I continued on very slowly and silently through the conveyers, since there were still people just 10m below me



working. Then it happened. A fucking DEER jumped into the conveyer, went super quick and disappeared into the power station. I almost had a fucking heart attack, but looking back it was so funny. I followed him and ended up in the top floor of the station.

Once in I had to try to find my way into the turbine hall. There were a lot of doors everywhere, some of which made a LOT of noise to open. When I had finally found the turbine hall 3 stories down it made quite some sound while opening. I went in and it was beautiful. A untouched colorful turbine, with a control panel that was still on. Sadly the control room door was closed, but I was able to take some decent pictures through the window.

After the infiltration which took more than 3 hours it was already dinner time. I had however arranged a warmshowers location on top of the hills here so I had to continue with my route. I pushed out the next 40km in 2 hours and finally arrived quite tired at the warmshowers address, or so I thought. I was looking for the house but it was nowhere to be found. Turns out the warmshowers app had a slightly wrong location. After talking to the host I went just 100m further and finally found it. It was a beautiful alone-standing house between the winefields. I went in and immediately got offered everything I wished for. A whole basement suite just for myself with a gym, bathroom, bike trainers and like 10k worth of bikes. When I went upstairs into the living room the host had cooked dinner just for me, an amazing huge meal. I ate a lot and we exchanged some stories. The woman turned out to have worked for the company that owns that specific power station, and the guy had done multiple ironman's [@markz\\_3athlet](https://www.ironman.com/athletes/markz). They explained to me they were going to bed but I could do whatever I wanted. Go swim, take some beers from the fridge or just chill downstairs. They gave me the keys and told me to just close it up when I continued on the next day. I just went to sleep on the sofa, but really couldn't sleep because of all the mosquitos. In the middle of the night I put up my tent inside of the basement, and slept inside of that to combat the mosquitos. After all a pretty chill night.



## Day 23: The last day of cycling, to Zagreb

69km, 270m, warmshowers host



After I woke up quite late I immediately got up and jumped into the pool. Yes they had a swimming pool I could use. I was in there for about half an hour just looking at the beautiful views. I packed up my tent, cleaned my shirt and continued on. The previous day I had discussed my route with the warmshowers hosts and they told me some nice places to go. I went east and followed some roads parallel to the highway all the way until the border with Croatia, about 30km. When I arrived at the border it wasn't very satisfying, because it was a really small road so there were no signs saying I was now in Croatia. I went back a bit, to a official border crossing and it was there that I put on the new sticker on my bike. Since it



was now about lunch time I went and got burek from the café right at the border. It was a nice break and good burek, but I had more kilometers to go. I made my way to Samobor following the river and got some ice cream. It started out at just one ball at 1 euro, but after talking to him a while I asked about the green apple ice cream, since I had never had

it before. He looked at it, and put a scoop on my cone. He then said something I couldn't understand and gave me 4 more scoops from different ice creams for me to try. He then saw a bolt that had come out on my rack and started looking in the back for a bolt that would fit. He fixed it, and even refused payment from me. Amazing people in this part of Europe. Just 10km later I arrived in the outskirts of Zagreb, the final city of this trip. I visited some of the major highlights in the city, like the big church and some other unique buildings. Also some Dutch ambulances driving around and a truck pulling a broken tram on the tracks. I finally made my way to the warmshowers host in Zagreb, a girl named Gabi @gabi\_mark .She wholeheartedly invited me to her apartment, and we cooked some dinner together. Was a nice place to call home for the night.



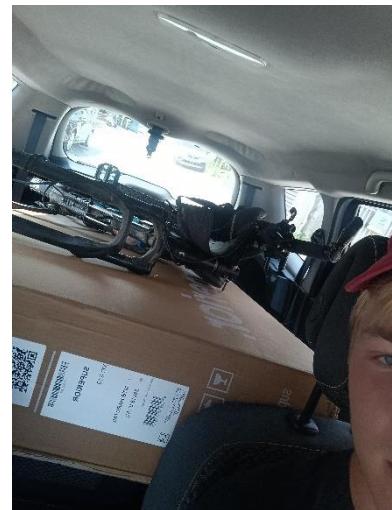
## Day 24: The final countdown

5km?, still at the warmshowers host



not get my front wheel unstuck, which needed to be taken off for putting it in a box. The awesome guy at the bike shop made it loose for me, and also helped me with my pedals which were apparently stuck. They gave me the box, but now I had a huge challenge. How do I take a huge box with me back to the apartment. I called an uber for the first time in my life, but the first one was too small. I called a uberxl, which luckily didn't cost much here, and he was able to transport both my box and my bike. He did have to scoot his seat all the way forwards but we made it fit. He gave me his number for the airport pickup the next day.

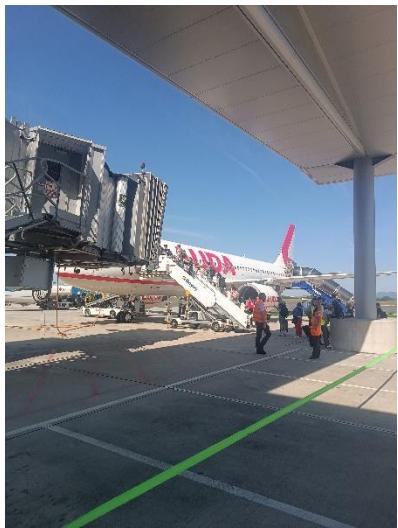
When I woke up Gabi was already at work. She had given me her house keys so I could get back in when I needed to. A couple of days earlier when I first arranged to meet with gab in Zagreb she had contacted the bike shop she normally goes to for me to arrange a box for flying. I cycled there and they helped me disassemble the bike. Because as you might remember back in Italy I could



Back at the apartment I got on my bike and went to a cevapi place. It was amazing and I ate so much of it, but I still had to fix my bike this day before all the shops were closed. I went to some building supplies store and got some bubble wrap and tie wraps. Was hard to find but I managed to do it. Back at the apartment again I was able to put the bike in the box after an hour of messing around and it fit very comfortably. Quite some stuff fit together with the bike, and using gabis household scale we were able to measure it out to exactly 30kg, the max for a Ryanair flight. I then found an old box in gabis apartment I used as a second check in suitcase and put some stuff like my clothes and bike lock in there, then wrapped it tight with duct tape. As a final thing to organize I went to the post office to ship my power bank. It was my homemade power bank so I was scared to bring it onto a flight. It worked well, and looked quite normal but it could still get plucked out at security and they would have big questions. The lady at the post office explained it might be sent back because it was maybe not allowed, but from my research there was no reason it was not. We ate cevapi again for dinner together, and then went to sleep.

## Day 25: The flight

1000km, 10km, back home



Very early in the morning I had arranged with the taxi driver from the day before to pick me up from Gabi's apartment. I said my goodbyes to Gabi and explained I would be coming back next year. He drove me and the bike to the airport, where I loaded it onto a cart. After a long process of trying to understand how special luggage worked I was able to load my bike and box onto the scanner in the airport and they loaded it on the plane. I went back, went through security and was able to make my way to the gate. I waited for HOURS and finally was able to board. I was super early on purpose because I had no idea how the special luggage thing worked, but it went super smooth. Flight went smooth and quickly, and when I landed

after waiting a while my bike came out of the special luggage pickup. I noticed the box had ripped, but luckily my Leatherman, which was loose at the top, was still in. This meant it had only just happened and I didn't lose anything. Phew.

When I came out my parents were waiting for me, and we straight away went to get some haubenworstenbroodjes. We loaded the whole box onto the roof of the car and drove to the market to get some kibbeling. Vacation completed :)



## Later

My power bank got sent back to Gabi lol. Will be back next year to pick it up and cycle to Greece :)